

VZCZCXRO3956
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW
DE RUEHDBU #1686/01 3271408
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P R 231408Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1396
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2328
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2302
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 0069
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3318

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 DUSHANBE 001686

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/23/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [PGOV](#) [TI](#) [AF](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: CENTCOM COMMANDER VISIT BUILDS RELATIONS, FOCUSES ON
AFGHANISTAN BORDER BRIDGE

CLASSIFIED BY: Tom Hushek, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy
Dushanbe, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Admiral William J. Fallon's 6 November 2007 visit to Dushanbe yielded a second meeting with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and first-time discussions with Defense Minister General-Colonel (U.S. 3-star equivalent) Sherali Khairulloyev and General-Colonel Khayriddin Abdurahimov, Chairman of the State Committee for National Security (GKNB). During his meeting with Admiral Fallon, Rahmon accepted responsibility for the failure to open the Nijniy-Pyanj bridge to significant traffic and asked for assistance in improving the security situation at the bridge. Rahmon provided his estimate of the situation with Iran and described the negative impacts of any US military action against Iran on Middle East peace and stability. Surprisingly absent from President Rahmon's comments were Russia or any of the security-related treaty organizations of which Tajikistan is a member.

12. (C) President Rahmon expressed gratitude for CENTCOM's security cooperation programs and extended an invitation for Admiral Fallon to stop in Dushanbe for a day of informal, face-to-face meetings with him on ways to approach Uzbek President Karimov prior to Admiral Fallon's planned January 2008 trip to Uzbekistan.

13. (C) The meeting with GKNB Chairman Abdurahimov was positive with Abdurahimov providing an arguably overly optimistic assessment of the current state of Embassy-GKNB/Border Guard relations. End summary.

Opening Informal Session with Defense Minister Khairulloyev

14. (C) Defense Minister General-Colonel (U.S. 3-star equivalent) Sherali Khairulloyev greeted Admiral Fallon at the presidential palace, and while waiting to be received by the President, they discussed Tajik-U.S. security cooperation and the roles of the various Tajik security forces. Khairulloyev expressed his satisfaction with the current level of military cooperation and his desire to increase joint Tajik-U.S. military programs. In

response to Admiral Fallon's questions about the degree of cooperation between the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the Border Guards, the minister described the role of each organization, noting that if the smaller Border Guard forces met a superior force threatening the interior of the country, the MOD would support the Border Guards as a second echelon force. Minister Khairulloyev also noted that the MOD provides the Border Guards many of its trained officers and that the two organizations conduct joint training exercises two to three times annually.

The Second Presidential Meeting - Continuing to Build the Personal Relationship

15. (C) Admiral Fallon, his political adviser, the Ambassador, and the Defense Attache had a ninety minute meeting with President Rahmon; Khairulloyev; Rahmon's Presidential Advisor on International Affairs; Erkin Rahmatulloyev; and General-Colonel Abdurahmon Azimov, Chief of the Presidential Administration on Defense, Law and Order.

16. (C) Building on the good will expressed during Admiral Fallon's June 19 visit, President Rahmon noted his gratitude and satisfaction with U.S-Tajik relations in all spheres, especially at the high level of U.S-Tajik security cooperation. Adding that Tajikistan was experiencing continuing challenges with some of its neighbors, Rahmon expressed a desire to broaden cooperation to solve these problems. He specifically highlighted the assistance with military training programs and in refurbishing border posts. He said that he looked to a future focus on counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism cooperation.

DUSHANBE 00001686 002 OF 004

17. (C) The absence of any mention of Russia as a partner or as an influencing factor in Tajikistan's future was noteworthy.

Continued Primacy of the Afghan Conflict and Narcotics

18. (C) President Rahmon repeated his previous overtures to Admiral Fallon on the importance to Tajikistan of a stable Afghanistan, noting that Tajikistan is on the front lines of both narcotics and terrorism threats. Rahmon emphasized the need to strengthen the Afghan authorities' capabilities so they could solve the country's problems. He stated that the weakness of Afghan authorities, allowed Afghanistan's enemies to exploit the divisions within its society. Rahmon also expressed some dismay at the large areas of Afghanistan still under Taliban influence. Rahmon said that he hopes for positive effects from coalition efforts in Afghanistan and that he is concerned that today the Taliban are a threat, but tomorrow they may actually be in power.

Afghanistan Needs Enlightenment - Tajikistan as a Model?

19. (C) President Rahmon assessed that Afghanistan and its society are very closed and harbor a high level of religious fanaticism, especially emanating from extremist mullahs who are not open to enlightened principles. Rahmon opined that Tajikistan needs a peaceful, stable, friendly, self-sufficient, developed country to its south. He portrayed Tajikistan as relatively more enlightened than Afghanistan and compared pre-civil war thinking in Tajikistan to contemporary Afghanistan. He stated that at that time in Tajikistan, no women dancers or singing groups/ensembles of any type were allowed. He said that mullahs should pray in mosques and not interfere in government affairs.

110. (C) President Rahmon recommended facilitating energy and

telecommunications exports to Afghanistan. He suggested that instead of Afghanistan receiving television broadcasts from Saudi Arabia, Iran or Pakistan, the Tajiks could export their own "enlightened" broadcasts. He invoked the benefit of increased exchange programs with Afghans, noting that Tajikistan's future as well as the rest of Central Asia's is through Afghanistan.

The Nijniy Pyanj Bridge and Related Infrastructure

¶11. (C) In response to Admiral Fallon's emphasis on opening the Nijniy Pyanj bridge to full capacity, President Rahmon admitted that the Tajik side was at fault for shortcomings in not expanding operating hours of the bridge earlier, but noted progress and positive effects from the bridge. Admiral Fallon mentioned that the lack of coordination between officials on both sides of the bridge was an obstacle. Rahmon insisted that when he had heard about a 400-truck backlog on the Afghan side of the border, he immediately ordered expanded opening hours for the bridge from four to eight hours a day and accelerated customs and visa processing, thereby reducing the backlog. Rahmon also claimed that he ordered inbound trucks carrying rice, flower, sugar and cooking oil from Afghanistan and Pakistan be allowed to cross the bridge. Rahmon noted that thus far the reaction from northern Afghanistan has been very positive.

¶12. (C) Asserting that the opening of the Nijniy Pyanj bridge would be just the start of broader economic relations between Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and all of their neighbors, President Rahmon described other ongoing infrastructure projects. He stated that a recent Asian Development Bank (ADB) agreement worth \$78m would accelerate the construction of the third phase of the road from Dushanbe to Sari Tosh, Kyrgyzstan, from three to two years.

¶13. (C) President Rahmon asked that the United States consider building another bridge south of the town of Farkar in Khatlon province at the site of the current Kokul ferry crossing to re-establish a trade route previously used to supply the

DUSHANBE 00001686 003 OF 004

Northern Alliance. He linked potential traffic along this route from Kokul to the airport and rail infrastructure at Kulyob and onward to Europe with trade benefits for both Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Admiral Fallon suggested that it would be better to first solve bureaucratic issues surrounding the existing bridge at Nijniy Pyanj until it was able to operate at full capacity.

Hydro Power as a Panacea, Save For Uzbek Intransigence

¶14. (C) President Rahmon lauded the development of hydroelectric power as the stimulus for Central Asian regional prosperity. He said that the completion of the Sangtuda 1 and 2 hydropower stations and the Yavan coal power station projects by 2010 would increase Tajikistan's electricity production capacity by 25 percent, or by 1,000 megawatts. Though this would allow export to Afghanistan, Rahmon noted that this is still far from adequate and that there are too many different approaches and contradictions to the management of water in Central Asia, especially by downstream countries. He highlighted the burdens of being the primary upstream provider, some costs of which included a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) worth \$22m to solidify and strengthen the banks of the Pyanj river and existing loans of \$57.7m from the ADB for other irrigation and water management projects.

¶15. (C) With another difficult winter season approaching, President Rahmon mentioned the critical need to provide Tajik citizens with energy. He stated that Tajikistan receives no winter energy subsidies as had been the case under the USSR. Rahmon said that Uzbek President Karimov himself had stopped a

deal that would have allowed the transit of Turkmen electricity through Uzbekistan to help meet winter energy demands. Rahmon also noted that the Karimov is doing everything possible to block a relatively modest 160mw, Chinese-sponsored hydro project on the Zarafshon River. Rahmon blamed Uzbekistan for harboring unfounded suspicions toward Tajikistan and further stated that Tajikistan has no hegemonic designs towards any country regarding water -Tajikistan is only trying to meet its own demand.

¶16. (C) Admiral Fallon agreed with Rahmon's emphasis on hydro projects and electricity generation and noted the importance of the planned 14 November 2007 electricity market meeting between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan in Kabul.

Offering Advice on Iran and Uzbekistan

¶17. (C) Admiral Fallon solicited President Rahmon's advice on finding meaningful approaches to Uzbek President Karimov during an expected trip to Uzbekistan after the first of the year. Rahmon invited Admiral Fallon to first visit Dushanbe and then Afghanistan before traveling to Tashkent. Rahmon and Defense Minister Khairulloyev agreed that flying directly from Dushanbe to Tashkent would irritate Karimov.

¶18. (C) President Rahmon discussed the importance of a diplomatic solution with Iran adding that the solution of this problem is crucial to deciding the ongoing conflicts in the greater Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan and is of primary interest to all Central Asian countries. Rahmon stated that if the United States took the lead on solving the Iranian problem diplomatically, success would be achieved far beyond Iraq and Afghanistan. He claimed that Iran would soon be isolated and that the Iranian people would solve their internal governance problems. Admiral Fallon commented that the Iranian government's behavior was the primary problem.

A Rare Meeting with the Chairman of the State Committee for National Security (GKNB)

¶19. (C) Admiral Fallon, his political adviser, the Ambassador, and the Global Research and Planning Office (GRPO) chief had a forty-five minute meeting with Khayriddin Abdurahimov, Chairman of the State Committee for National Security (GKNB). This was

DUSHANBE 00001686 004 OF 004

one of the few times since the reorganization of the GKNB and the subordination of the Border Guards almost one year ago that EMBOFFS have met with the chairman himself. During the course of the meeting, which began stiffly, Abdurahimov warmed noticeably.

¶20. (S) Chairman Abdurahimov thanked the U.S. for what he termed mutually beneficial relations and cooperation, and described the U.S. provision of equipment and technical assistance to the Main Border Force Administration (Border Guards) of the GKNB as being good. He then made a series of claims which differ substantially from Embassy Dushanbe's observations and assessments. These claims include: that there are positive programs of cooperation between the Tajik and Afghan Border Guards, including in the areas of countering narcotics and weapons trafficking; that a good information exchange exists with U.S. intelligence representatives in Dushanbe; and that some (unspecified) earlier "misunderstandings" with the Embassy have been cleared up and that the GKNB has now "solved the issues" through a regular dialogue with the Ambassador.

¶21. (C) Admiral Fallon and Chairman Abdurahimov exchanged views on the security situation in Afghanistan, especially on U.S.-led efforts to build a well-trained, professional Afghan army, police force, and border guard force. Abdurahimov indicated

agreement with Admiral Fallon's assessment of the various Afghan security elements. Abdurahimov stated his view that Border Guard commanders on both the Afghan and Tajik sides have served for too long, are too closely tied to the local population, including criminal elements, and therefore should be replaced by officers from other regions of the respective countries. He went on to describe changes he has made since the GKNB assumed responsibility for the Border Guards as a result of a government reorganization following the November 2006 presidential election. He noted that since the election, he has fired fifty percent of the Border Guard commanders and replaced more senior officers with junior ones whom he claimed have "new education and attitudes." In this regard, the Abdurahimov described his travel throughout the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of eastern Tajikistan in summer 2007 to observe each Border Guard post and checkpoint firsthand and to meet the troops. He noted the privations many of the troops endure and said that, as a result of his findings, he held a general meeting after his return to Dushanbe and fired all the "incompetent" commanders.

¶22. (S) Chairman Abdurahimov claimed to have been reluctant to assume responsibility for the Border Guards within the GKNB organization. Abdurahimov said that he "almost resigned" as head of the GKNB rather than agreeing to take on the Border Guards. This statement is diametrically opposed to U.S. Embassy and intelligence reporting and analysis of the reorganization as a power grab on the part of the GKNB leadership generally and Abdurahimov specifically.

Comments

¶23. (C) Overall, in their meetings with Admiral Fallon, the Tajiks demonstrated their desire for continued U.S. and CENTCOM security cooperation and material support and continued the spirit of cooperation in evidence at their first engagements.

¶24. (C) Subsequent to the visit, the Embassy received a diplomatic note confirming Tajikistan's acceptance of the Global Peace Operations Initiative. Admiral Fallon's mentioning of this program in the post-meeting press conference may have shaken loose this long-awaited, affirmative decision. End comment.

¶25. (U) Admiral Fallon reviewed this cable.

¶26. (U) POC: Lieutenant Colonel Dan Green, USA, Defense and Army Attache, USDAO Dushanbe, voice: (992)(37) 229-2701, cell:(992) (93) 570-7030, classified email: digredy(at)dia.smil.mil or greendr2(at)state.sgov.gov, unclass email: HYPERLINK "BLOCKED::mailto:GREENDR2(AT)STATE.GOV"GREEND R2(AT)STATE.GO V"greendr2(at)state.gov.
HUSHEK